



team already knew his blood type and any relevant personal medical information.

It turned out that Clinton's secretary of state, Warren Christopher, was the one who needed a doctor. Suffering discomfort from a bleeding ulcer, he spent a night at the Civic and flew home the next afternoon with Clinton.

Whenever VIPs come calling, Brunet coordinates with regional representatives and provincial officials to ensure that a hospital has been designated and placed on emergency notice. Plans became complicated this summer during the Queen's visit to Bonavista, Nfld. The town only had a cottage hospital, says Brunet, and that wouldn't do. Health Canada added a helicopter, which could airlift the Queen to nearby

Gander, to its contingency plans, which also allowed for a team of paramedics and an ambulance.

Things became even trickier late last year when hundreds of VIPs converged on Ottawa and Vancouver for separate international conferences. The Ottawa meeting to sign the global treaty banning the use of land mines attracted foreign ministers from well over 100 countries, and they not only had access to physicians but could also call on dentists and an optometrist.

The Vancouver meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum involved 18 heads of state and at least 14 of the leaders, including Clinton, were designated high-security VIPs. Each one had a personal physician assigned around the clock, and until they left their entourages

always included an ambulance. A medical clinic that operated 12 hours a day was also set up at the Vancouver meeting. — © Christopher Guly

### Diabetes threatening young native children

An epidemic of non-insulin-dependent diabetes (NIDD) in First Nations' adults in central Canada is now affecting the health of aboriginal children as young as 6, a Winnipeg pediatric endocrinologist says.

Dr. Heather Dean says she started to see First Nations' youngsters with NIDD in the early 1980s. "It took me quite a while to realize that this was not type I diabetes because it was appearing in such a young population," she said.

Indeed, Dean said her original pa-

## Action needed on ozone layer, auditor general warns

Canada's auditor general, who usually comments on federal finances, took an extraordinary step in December when he chastised the federal government for ignoring the growing health threat posed by a thinning ozone layer. He also said that many Canadians don't even take simple precautions, like using a sun-screening lotion, despite the potential danger. Canada is considered to be at severe risk because the thinning ozone layer has been most noticeable over the Arctic. An audit conducted by Denis Desautels' department found that Canada's efforts to protect the ozone layer "have lost momentum." So have Canadians' efforts to protect themselves by using sun screens and taking other precautions — the auditor's report said half of Canadians do not protect themselves adequately from ultraviolet radiation during leisure activities. The report also criticized federal departments

for failing to take the lead in eliminating the use of ozone-depleting substances.

Jeanne Simpson



The thinning of the ozone layer hold serious implications for Canada's physicians. "Because of its

northern location, Canada is one of the countries most at risk from the harmful effects of ozone depletion," said Desautels. "It is believed to have played a role in the 300% increase in the rate of melanoma cancer between 1969 and 1992. In 1997 it is estimated that 61 000 Canadians will develop skin cancer and 3200 will have melanoma."

The annual auditor general's report usually casts a close eye on examples of government waste. In entering the ozone-depletion debate, the federal agency said that even though this is considered one of the most serious health threats humans have ever faced, "the federal government has failed to live up to its own commitments to lead by example in 'greening' government." The report concluded that Ottawa should attempt to develop effective strategies and work closely with the provinces to help deal with the problem. — Patrick Sullivan